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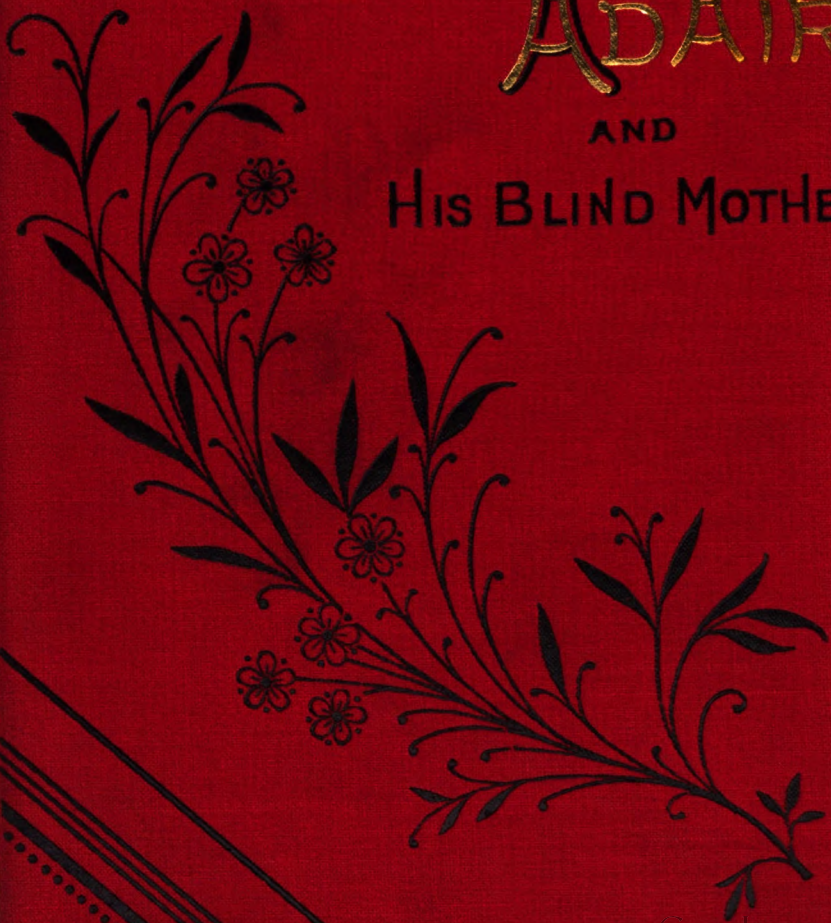
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HARRY ADAIR

AND

HIS BLIND MOTHER





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HARRY ADAIR

AND

HIS BLIND MOTHER.

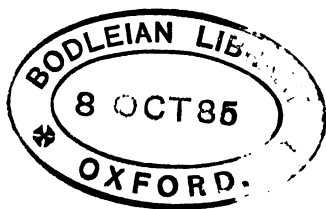
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LONDON:
HATCHARDS, PICCADILLY.

1885.

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Dedicated

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TO

THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY.

HARRY ADAIR.



CHAPTER I.

“ The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown ;
No traveller ever reached that blest abode,
Who found not thorns and briers on the road.”



ANY years ago, in one of the loveliest parts of Devon, the hills and valleys resounded with a gladsome pæan, for it was the wedding-day of Colonel Desborough's only son, the heir of Desborough Court, and all the surrounding country. Great were the rejoicings, for the young bride was all the fondest parent could desire for his son. She was my father's ward, and ever unto him as a daughter ; but how mysterious are the ways of

Providence, and human bliss how transitory! During our wedding-tour my beloved wife was thrown from her horse in the streets of Brussels, and fatally injured.

Then in my despair I realised that "There is a Reaper whose name is Death," and that he was knocking loudly at my door. The Lord of Paradise came and claimed the darling of my heart for his own, and holy angels wafted her pure spirit to the realms of bliss. I took the remains of all I held most precious upon earth back to Desborough. No joyful epithalamium to greet me this time, but in its place the solemn requiem for the dead, and the tears of a multitude who wept for a loved one they would behold no more. I buried her by the side of my mother, who had died in my infancy, and then I bade a long farewell to my dear father, and became a desolate wanderer on the face of the earth. Nothing but perpetual change of scene enabled me to forget

for one moment the profound sorrow of my heart. My footsteps traversed Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; endeavouring to forget myself, in surveying the wondrous works of Nature, and all her various and endless phenomena. Years had rolled over my head, when, amidst the sublime scenery of South America, all alone in my misery, I lifted up my heart to God, and found peace in that Redeemer, in whom my beloved one had placed all her confidence and hope.

Wrapped in profound meditation, for days together would I wander in the primeval forests and deep solitudes of this glorious Eldorado, conversing in spirit with my Heavenly Father.

“ In desert woods with Thee, my God,
Where human footsteps never trod,
How happy could I be !
Thou my repose from care,
My light amidst the darkness of the night,
In solitude my company.”

Then after a time I felt an earnest desire to

return to my native country, to behold again, after so many years of exile, the lovely home of my youth, and like Robinson Crusoe to prepare for a longer journey than I had ever yet taken. Moreover, I felt I must be up and doing work for my Master, and seeing to the welfare of my tenantry, whom I had so long neglected.

When once again I beheld Desborough Court, the grand old home of my ancestors, how beautiful it looked ! but less fortunate than Ulysses of old, whose faithful Argus caused the shores of Ithaca to resound with joy at his old master's approach, and who crowned the ovation with his life ; the echo of no familiar voice, either human or canine, heralded my advent, or welcomed my return to the home of my fathers. All had passed away to the land of oblivion, and a new dynasty reigned in their stead. Not the vestige of a change appeared in the place itself ; but how different to its master, so altered in

appearance that no one could have recognised me as the young heir of former years, who had left the Court on his wedding-day, full of youth, health, and radiant felicity ; for I now returned to it a broken-down and prematurely old man—but, nevertheless, possessed of a peaceful happiness, which no words can describe, which nothing in this world could trouble or disturb, because it was built upon the Rock of Ages. Well might I echo the beautiful words of St. Augustine : “O Thou primeval Beauty, too late have I known Thee !”

When I was settled at the Court, my first object was to restore the old church, which I found to be in a sad state of dilapidation, mildew and decay reigning supreme in every part, the rain pouring in in various directions ; many of the poor having to hold their umbrellas over their heads during the whole service. This church, a curious relic of the dark ages, the resort of tourists, and the study of antiquaries,

had belonged to one of the monastic establishments dissolved in the time of Henry VIII., but its earlier history was lost in obscurity. It contained in niches faded portraits of many of the Roman Catholic saints, who evidently had not forsaken the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, for they were arrayed in crimson and gold, purple and fine linen ; and their heads were crowned with a nimbus of precious stones, all in their decadence speaking of departed grandeur.

In one corner near the Vestry was the better-preserved effigy (evidently of a later date) of the Bearded Maid of Saragossa ; two saints with vials of sacred water were standing at each side of her pouring the oblation over the beard, seemingly endeavouring to exorcise the evil spirit which had so spitefully caused its abnormal growth on the face of a woman. Underneath, half obliterated, were inscribed the words, "A thorn in the flesh," evidently alluding to the


beard, nearly half a yard in length, and which the saintly lustrums failed to diminish. I knew this woman was not a myth, as I had read her history in Spain. Tradition asserts that this portrait was painted by her brother, one of the saved crew of a Spanish vessel wrecked off the coast, who together with others took up their abode in the neighbourhood: and not far from this are families of rare beauty with lustrous dark eyes, hair, and complexions; such as might indicate a Spanish origin.

To see my own house so beautiful, and the house of God in ruins, was a sore grief to me. The clergyman, to whom my father had given the living, was a single man, and a great scholar. Being in poor health, he said he had become depressed and inert from want of some congenial spirit with whom to fraternise. The congregation was entirely composed of poor people, to whom he could not apply for help to repair the church, and as I was an exile

from my native country, he did not like to trouble me about it. Now he awakened like a giant out of a long sleep, and became exceedingly anxious that I should undertake its restoration ; but, after a thorough examination, that was found to be quite impossible ; the only thing to be done was to build a new one, which I resolved to do, as a thank-offering to God for all His loving-kindness to me, and for bringing me home in peace and safety. Mr. Pelham undertook to make all the necessary arrangements, and to see that the work was commenced as soon as possible. It was wonderful to observe the change that had come over the spirit of his dream ; he was now as active as possible in the parish, and an able and willing coadjutor in all my undertakings.

CHAPTER II.

“ There’s a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.”

NE splendid autumn afternoon, shortly after my return home, I started to explore the country to which I had so long been a stranger. As I rode for miles, not thinking or knowing whither I was going, suddenly, like a vision of the past, there rose to my view a district that went by the name of “No Man’s Land,” and which I remembered having once seen in the days of my youth. There had been stories of pirates and bloodshed connected with the place, and as the land was poor and worthless, no one took the trouble to claim it, and it was deserted. Now,

after the lapse of years, it seemed to have especial attractions for me, and a secret impulse impelled me forward. Oh what a desolate part of the country it was, close to the shores of an ever-rugged, surging ocean, the roaring of the waves thereof seldom ceasing day or night ! The witches of Macbeth might have boiled their caldrons in the midst of this penetralia without interruption. I perceived two semi-detached desolate cottages, parts of both apparently in ruins, but carefully propped up with spars from the sea and stones from the quarry. In wonderful contrast, as if to mock the mutability of man's work, there stood out prominently in front of each cottage some grand old trees, which seemed to bid defiance to the rude blasts of Boreas, and to the decaying hand of old Father Saturn. I felt sure some one must be inhabiting them, as I saw two goats running about, and they could not have got there by chance ; so tying my horse

to a tree, I walked up to the door of one of them, which was partly open, when I heard such a heavenly voice singing the well-known hymn—

“All hail the power of Jesus’ name !
Let angels prostrate fall ;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.”

Surely, thought I, Saint Cecilia must have descended from the spheres to glorify this waste howling wilderness with her presence, and to perfume the desert air with the melody of her voice.

The sweet harmonious notes suddenly ceased, and a very pleasant, frank-looking person appeared, who said, with a little Scotch accent, “Pray come in, sir, and rest yourself; my mistress will be so glad ; it is a long time since she has spoken to any one, excepting to Master Harry and me. I am Milly, her servant, and Master Harry is her son and only child.”

“Well, Milly,” said I, “after your pleasant

welcome, I should much like to go in, if I am not intruding upon your mistress."

"Sir, my mistress wishes you to come in; she has always been expecting some one, and I think you must be that person, for when I told her you were at the door, she exclaimed, 'Then perhaps he has come at last!'"

"I do not think, Milly, I can be that person, for I am a stranger to your mistress, and I am afraid she will be much disappointed when she sees me, but I will go in with you all the same."

To my great surprise, I entered a neat, pretty little room, and there, reclining in an easy-chair, I beheld the Saint Cecilia whose sweet voice had so entranced me. Although dressed in the coarsest and commonest clothes, one recognised at once a perfect lady. I gazed with the deepest interest on this faded but still lovely form, apparently in the last stage of consumption. Her hair was as white as snow,

and her dark and speaking eyes looked the more brilliant from the contrast. It was a face never to be forgotten—so full of love, truth, and sweetness. At her feet sat a fine, manly-looking little fellow, busily engaged in making baskets; he jumped up immediately, and placed a chair for me by the side of his mother.

“Welcome,” said she, “to my humble abode, for I feel sure, by the sound of your voice, that you come in a friendly spirit. We have no right to be in these cottages, but have lived in them for five years, and you are the first stranger who has ever entered the doors; and I hope we shall no longer be strangers to each other, for I feel great pleasure in your visit.”

“Rest assured,” I replied, “that I feel a real pleasure in making your acquaintance. I am a lone man, and do not find many congenial spirits in my daily path—but excuse me for saying so. It seems passing strange to me to

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find a lady like you living in this weird and desolate spot."

"Yes," she said with a smile, "any stranger might justly imagine that we had come here to escape the hands of justice, but far from it. It was the voice of my Heavenly Father that spoke to me at a time of great sorrow, and directed my steps to this place, where I have found a happy and peaceful home with my beloved child and my dear friend Milly;—but where is Harry?"

"I am here, dear mother; shall I go and tell Milly to bring in some of her nice oat-cakes and some milk for this gentleman? Perhaps he has had a long ride, and I will run and give his horse some water."

"Oh Harry, dear! I am so glad you thought of it," said his mother; but, turning to me, she added, "I am afraid you will not like goat's milk; few people do; and I am so sorry I have nothing better to offer you."

"I have no dislike to it," I replied, "having been accustomed to it in Switzerland, but I should much prefer a glass of cold water ; it is more refreshing to me than anything else when I am tired ; and Harry," said I, "it was very kind of you to think of me and my horse. I am sure Robin will, like his master, fully appreciate a good draught of cold water."

Away went Harry, and his mother and I were left alone. Then to my astonishment she told me she was quite blind, and that she never touched upon the subject before Harry, as it made him so sorrowful.

How, thought I, could those beautiful eyes, with their ever-varying expression, be sightless ? yet so it was. Nevertheless, she was as cheerful and happy as though she possessed every blessing. Well might an ancient philosopher exclaim—"To see Virtue struggling with Adversity, is one of the grandest sights ever witnessed by the Gods !"

“You cannot think,” she said, “what a noble little fellow my Harry is ; his devoted affection is alone worth worlds to me. I thank God for it daily in my prayers. And Milly too, I must tell you about her ; no words can express what she has been to me ; she was formerly my nurse, now she is nurse, friend, and everything combined. I neither know nor feel any difference between her and myself. It was Milly alone who made these cottages habitable ; she came down before I did, and worked like a slave for me and Harry ; she stopped up all the holes in the walls first, and then she papered the rooms, putting some magnesia into the paste, which, she said, prevented the damp coming through ; and when that was finished, she paved the outside of the doors with flints, for it was a perfect swamp before. I was not quite blind when first I came, and when I saw it all looking so clean and pretty, I was both astonished and delighted, which was a great joy to

Milly. But you will be tired of hearing all about me and mine; your kind words and manner make me forget that this is the first time we have met."

"And I forget it too," I replied; "I feel as if I had known you all my life, for there is between us 'that touch of nature which makes the world akin,' and I bless the guiding hand that brought me here. You have given me a fresh interest in life, and this has been one of the happiest days I have ever spent."

"Oh," she said, "I cannot tell you how sweet your tender sympathy is to a poor blind creature like me; your visit has afforded me great pleasure, and I trust you will often renew it; but I hear Milly's step;" and in she came, with a tray full of cakes, of which she hoped I would partake.

"Indeed," said I, "they look so tempting, perhaps you may see me demolish the whole of them, and leave none to tell the tale; but, Milly,

I have been hearing your praises sung by your mistress. So you papered this pretty room, and made the inside of the place what it is ? ”

“ Yes, sir, I did my best to make it fit for my dear mistress. My father was a builder and house-decorator, and I learnt a good deal from him ; and, sir, if it were not for the fear of the constable, I would make the outside fit for a prince too, but we must, by all manner of means, keep that gentleman out of the place, and not put a flag out to invite him here.”

“ Poor Milly,” said her mistress, “ is haunted for days together with the dread of some imaginary enemy, whom she designates the Constable, and who she thinks will make a raid upon us, seize our effects, and drive us out to take refuge under the canopy of heaven. When she told me a gentleman was at the door, I expected her to exclaim, ‘ Hast thou found me, Oh mine enemy ? ’ ”

“ I think, Milly,” said I, “ you need not trouble yourself about the constable ; depend upon it, he

is far too fond of his comforts, so that he is not likely to find his way to such a desolate spot as this in a hurry ; perhaps, too, he is afraid of ghosts and hobgoblins, so this is the last place he would come to, and as possession is nine points of the law, I do not think he could turn you out ; anyway, I will take upon me to say he shall not, so make your mind easy on that score. When he comes refer him to me, for I have power to settle it all to your entire satisfaction."

I could have told them that I was Lord of the Manor for miles round, and could claim all the waste land whenever I chose.

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Milly, "I am so glad you will not let him turn us out, after we have made it all so comfortable. The next time you come I should like to show you my mistress's and Master Harry's little rooms upstairs, and my own cottage too, where we have our kitchen, for there is no place here to cook in ; but you

must excuse me now, sir, as I am baking a little bread !”

“ Good-bye, Milly, and many thanks for your cakes, which were excellent : no one but a Scotch woman can make them to perfection.”

Away went Milly, and after her disappearance I felt it was high time for me to say farewell to her mistress, for I had been some hours in her company without realising that it was getting dark, and I had a ride of ten miles before me.

“ Farewell, dear friend,” said she ; “ you have made me so very happy, I shall count the hours till you return.”

“ And that,” I replied, “ I hope will be the day after to-morrow.”

Just as I was going to mount my horse, which Milly brought to the door, Harry came running in haste to shake hands with me, so I asked him to walk a little way with me, whilst I led the horse.

“Now, Harry,” I said, “I should like you to tell me what your mother wants most ; it would be such an intense pleasure to me to minister in any way to her comfort.”

“Oh, sir,” replied Harry, “mother would be very much vexed indeed, if I told you she wanted anything ; indeed Milly and I see that she has everything she likes, and she is ever pleased and contented with all we do for her. I am a strong boy, sir, and it is my pride to work for mother.”

“But, my dear Harry, I should like to prove my friendship for her in deeds, and not in words only ; she is apparently very delicate, and she would be the better for some little luxuries you might not be able to procure for her, although I am sure you would give her all the world if you had it.”

“Indeed I would, for I love my mother with all my heart, and you too, sir, for being so kind to her.”

“Well, my boy, I am coming back the day after to-morrow. In the meantime think of what I asked you about your mother, and consult Milly. Now good-bye, I must ride home as fast as Robin can carry me.”

“To say good-night is such sweet sorrow,
That I could say good-night until to-morrow.”

CHAPTER III.

“ Dare to be right, dare to be true,
You have a work that no other can do ;
Do it so bravely, so kindly, so well,
As to gladden all heaven, and silence all hell.”

ON my way home I could not but meditate upon the various vicissitudes of this world, and the strange destiny that had led me to visit this oasis in the desert, and there to discover these lovely flowers of humanity, the cultivation of whose friendship would, I felt sure, be my greatest treasure, and the greatest solace of my life.

The gentle lady of “ No Man’s Land ” had said, in her own gracious manner, that she would count the hours till I returned ; and oh !

with what heartfelt pleasure I looked forward to seeing her again! The sordid calculating children of this world might smile at the sudden growth of our friendship, and expect it, like Jonah's gourd, to wither in a day. But why, I ask, should not friendship, as well as love, be formed at first sight? Surely it is the voice of Nature speaking within us, and prompting our hearts to beat in unison with kindred spirits.

On the appointed day, when I got near "No Man's Land," I saw Harry running to meet me.

"Well, Harry," said I, "here I am again. How is your mother?"

"Very happy, sir, looking forward to seeing you."

"Have you thought, Harry, of what I said about your mother, or consulted Milly on the subject?"

"No, sir; because, upon consideration, I thought mother would not like it; she never

expresses a wish for anything more than she has, and we are so very comfortable. You see, sir, I sell my baskets, and all the pretty things mother knits. I take them, now and then, to the beach five miles from this, where there are always a number of people, and dear old Sailor Jack lets me rest in his boat-house. I take my dinner with me and eat it there. I used to go with Milly till last year, but now I am old enough to go alone, and Milly thinks that dear mother should never be left by herself for a moment. When Milly goes to buy what is wanted, I stay with mother till she returns, and she sings to me, and teaches me many things."

"My dear Harry, although I admire your independence of mind, I am grieved to think you will accept nothing at my hands."

"Oh, sir, do not say that, your friendship is very dear to mother and me."

"Well, Harry, it is early days yet, and not many hours since we first met; when your

mother knows me better, she will, I hope, feel differently. Our blessed Saviour has commanded us to help one another, and He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' so the benefit would be all on my side, and not on hers."

"Oh, sir, how kind you are to put it in that way, but dear mother always says there are millions much poorer than we are, and many who have not a place to lay their heads in. One of her favourite texts is, 'Blessed is he who considers the poor.' She has always taught me to give away half of the money I get for her work and my baskets; and I give it to Sailor Jack, who has a missionary box, and one also for the poor."

"Well, Harry, my boy, you have innocently taught me a grand lesson, which I trust I shall never forget. If you and your mother can give away half of your little earnings, what ought I to do, who am a very rich man, and no one at

present to provide for but myself? and, Harry, on my way here to-day I was thinking about your education. You must not always be as you are now ; you ought to have an education befitting the son of a gentleman."

"Oh, sir, dear mother has sometimes regretted that she could not give me the same education my father had ; but she is so clever, and although she has lost her sight, she has taught me French and Latin, and oh ! such a number of things. Milly taught me to read and write, and I copied my father's writing as well as I could. I now read to mother every day, and it is wonderful how patient and kind she is to me ; for you see, sir, I am only a poor rough boy, accustomed to hard work, and not like a gentleman's son."

"Now there, Harry, I quite differ from you. No one on earth could mistake you for anything else but a gentleman's son ; and, my boy, we have St. Paul's testimony as to the nobility

of labour, which can put to shame those luxurious effeminate Sybarites, whose motto is 'Dolce far niente,' whose God is Self, and who live only for the gratification of their senses, regardless of the sorrows and wants of their fellow-creatures. A little time hence, Harry, when your mother knows me better, I will talk to her about your education, but I will say no more at present; and now, my boy, will you kindly take my horse for me, and I will go in to your mother?"

I passed some hours of great happiness with my new friends, and upon each succeeding visit I became more and more attached to them, and yet we did not know each other's names!

On one occasion I found Milly at the door waiting to take me to her mistress, who was anxiously expecting me; and when we had exchanged our first pleasant greetings, she said, "Dear friend, you kindly expressed a wish, the

other day, to hear something of my past life, and of the guiding hand of my Heavenly Father, which led me to take refuge from the cares and storms of life in this lonely spot. It is a simple story, and soon told. I wrote it all out when first I came here, before I was quite blind. I thought Harry would like to read it when I was dead. I have very seldom touched upon the past with him, as he is very sensitive, and I feared it might cast a shadow upon his young life. I leave the little narrative in your kind hands, to read when you have a spare moment."

"I take such a deep interest," I replied, "in all that concerns you and Harry, that I long to read everything you have written."

As I was riding home that evening, lost in thought, with the little narrative in my pocket, a light seemed suddenly to shine in my heart, and a voice as of a ministering spirit to say to me, "You are a very rich man, and have no heir; adopt Harry Adair for your son."

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That very moment, from the deep fountains of my heart, there arose a cry, I will, I will ! and oh ! ye stars of light, shining in the firmament above, be ye witnesses of my vow ; and may the Recording Angel register in the Archives of Heaven, that upon this auspicious night a son and heir has been vouchsafed unto me.

I was filled with a new and sweet emotion at the blessed inspiration, for such I believed it to be—as truly as though some bright beatific vision had been granted to me from on high ; for, speaking of angelic hosts, has not our Heavenly Father declared, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation ?”

Immediately I resolved to return on the following day, to impart to Harry’s mother the revelation, which, like the benediction of some celestial visitant, had crowned my head with the oil of joy and gladness.

CHAPTER IV.

“These are they which have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

AS soon as I got into my own study I commenced the perusal of my friend's narrative, which was headed—

A Short Account of my past Life. To be given to My Dear Son Harry when I am dead.

CONSTANCE ADAIR.

My father was Admiral Henry Seymour, and for a few years before his death we lived very quietly in a pretty little place at Torquay. We were not well off, and all that could

possibly be saved out of our small income was devoted to keeping my only brother at Oxford: he was a young man of splendid talents, and my father fondly hoped that he would shine in the world, and be an honour to his family; but he was very extravagant, and often we had to deny ourselves in many things to enable us to pay the debts he incurred. At Baliol with him was Lionel Adair, a distant connection of my father's, and whenever my brother came home Lionel accompanied him; he was one of the noblest characters living, and as highly gifted as my brother. My father was much attached to him, and felt that he would be a good influence with his son.

It was impossible for me to be associated with Lionel Adair and not love him, and an ardent attachment sprang up between us, which neither time nor circumstances could change. We were heart and soul one in

everything, and nothing but death could sever us ; but Lionel was poor like ourselves, and was only kept at Baliol by the uncertain liberality of a capricious uncle, who often threatened to withdraw his allowance.

My father objected greatly to our engagement, as he said he saw nothing but poverty and destitution staring us in the face if we were married.

About this time a family from London took a place near us for sea-bathing, and we became very intimate. The eldest son, who occupied a grand position, and was the possessor of large estates in Scotland, was daily in our house. I often hid myself when he came, for I knew full well what brought him there, as he had often told me he could not live without me. When he asked me to be his wife, I told him of my engagement to Lionel, and said I would never marry any one else. He entreated me to change my mind, and would take no

refusal, saying he would wait for me as long as Jacob waited for Rachel.

It was heartrending to witness my poor father's grief, when all his own urgent entreaties failed to make any impression on me. I could only answer, that I preferred Lionel and poverty to the grandest marriage in the world. My brother was furious at my decision, and wrote to Lionel to give me up. Lionel's answer was simply "Never." Ambition, sometimes called the "glorious fault of heroes and of Gods," was his ruling passion. Upon this altar he was ready, without the slightest compunction, to sacrifice his sister's happiness for life. With a voice that might have shaken Olympus, he called me "a fool and a mad woman." He then left the house, and I have never seen him since.

Various conflicting passions were now agitating the hearts of our little household. The apple of discord had been thrown down, and

peace and happiness ceased to reign in our midst. It was therefore like a gleam of sun shining through the clouds, when my father announced one morning that he had received a letter from his oldest and dearest friend and cousin, Colonel Desborough, inviting us to stay with him as long as we found it agreeable; and although we might think it rather solitary, as he was quite alone, we should be sure of a warm welcome and perfect liberty, an advantage which my father said one seldom enjoyed on a visit, and which was a great attraction to us both.

It was years since the two friends had met, as we had lived abroad for my education. Colonel Desborough was one of the most delightful persons I had ever met, and nothing could exceed his kindness to both my father and myself. I forgot all my cares in the light of his presence, and in the soothing influence of his Christian life. A shadow never seemed to

rest upon his face, excepting when he spoke of his only son, who was across the Atlantic, and whom he feared he would never see again.

I had never beheld so beautiful a place as Desborough Court, and I wandered about with Milly for miles every day. Sometimes we went in the pony carriage, and we used to get out, and leave it in charge of the groom, whilst we walked long distances and back again. It was on one of these occasions that we suddenly entered a deep, narrow defile, and when we emerged from it, we stood upon a desolate plain nearly surrounded with rocks. "This is a desert," I exclaimed, "Oh, Milly! it is just the place for me." I was greatly struck by the deep solemnity of the scene, and the profound silence that reigned unbroken, excepting by the roaring of the waves, but Milly, so strong in mind and body, was greatly affrighted, inheriting much of the superstition of her country; she seemed to expect that Fauns and Satyrs would be peeping

out of every corner. We sat upon the rocks to rest ourselves, and I sung some of my favourite airs to soothe her, then with a deep sigh my heart fondly turned to Lionel, and all he had suffered for my sake, and I wondered if I should ever see his dear face again. The waves seemed to echo back the deep longing of my soul, and to cry "Come again, oh, come again!" Milly, perceiving what was passing in my mind, strove to comfort me, and in doing so she forgot all her own fears, and the sunny smile returned to her face. I suggested that we should explore the place still further, and after a little time we came to these cottages, with their splendid trees in front. Externally they appeared much as they do now—a deserted ruin, and evidently no human being had occupied them for a length of time, yet the whole scene had a fascination for me which I can hardly describe. My heart could utter no responsive echo to the lines—

“O Solitude ! where are the charms
Which sages have seen in thy face ?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms
Than reign in this horrible place.”

I loved Solitude, and perceived great charms in her face. I would sooner, I thought, reign in peace in this, to some people, horrible place, than dwell in the midst of a world so full of the alarms of war and discord ; but then I had forgotten that I was not quite alone, like Alexander Selkirk, but I had Milly always with me, and I said to her, “Milly, I have ever a presentiment that misfortunes await me some day, and that I shall realise my father’s prediction of want and destitution,—then, when I have no place to lay my head in, I will come and take up my abode here.”

“And if ever that day comes,” said Milly, “you will not be alone ; I will be with you.”

On our return to Desborough I stopped at the Lodge and asked (without mentioning that we had been there), if they had ever heard of

some strange desolate cottages in the neighbourhood near the sea ?

They replied, "Oh yes, Miss, a horrible set of smugglers lived there once. No one goes near the place, for people who go there never come back again. It is called 'No Man's Land,' but we don't want to speak about it, Miss, as it is covered with dead men's bones, and we shake all over when we think of it."

Neither Milly nor I had seen any bones about, but we took the hint, and asked no more questions.

Within a year of our visit to Desborough Court, both my father and Col. Desborough were numbered with the dead. My poor father's affairs were found to be in a desperate state, and after all his debts were paid there was nothing left for me. My brother was heir to an estate entailed upon him at the death of a distant relation ; he was making his way in the world, was an M.P., and an eloquent

speaker; and had, moreover, a Government appointment, so he was well provided for. The instant Lionel heard of my father's death, he flew to comfort me. Nothing could exceed his earnest love and devotion. He had taken orders, and was a curate with £120 a year, and he said if I would only share his poverty with him, it would be the glory and joy of his life to make me happy. As soon as the days of mourning for my father were over, we were married. Our Rector being also the Squire of the place, occupied his own house, and allowed us to live in the Rectory free of rent. He was an old man and not able to work, and the next presentation to the living was promised to Lionel. In the meantime the whole responsibility of a large parish devolved upon him; he was a most eloquent preacher, and his ministry was blest to the conversion of many precious souls. The end and aim of his life was to honour and serve the Lord who bought him, and

no one could surpass him in his ardent zeal and love for the bodies and souls of men. Whenever I read that beautiful verse concerning his great prototype Stephen, "And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel," I think of Lionel—the brave, the noble, the straightforward man of God, whose religion had no sickly sentimentality about it—no pompous ritual to captivate the senses and deaden the soul, but which sought to bring the hearts of his people into full obedience to the Gospel of Christ, and to live out what they professed.

We were supremely happy in each other, and in our new home, where Harry was born, and another treasure added to our little household. We dedicated our dear child to the Lord, and prayed night and day for His choicest blessings to rest upon his head.

We had been married just five years, when sorrow and tribulation came down upon us

like an overwhelming avalanche. Scarlet fever raged in our midst, and decimated the surrounding neighbourhood. Often did I see several coffins in many cottages. One poor woman, who was a widow, showed me six piled up one upon another—she had lost all her children at one fell swoop. I shall never forget her despairing countenance when she exclaimed, “Was there ever sorrow like unto my sorrow?”

Lionel, who had studied medicine as well as divinity, was out all day and night ministering to the sick and dying, with the most heroic self-devotion. One evening he came home unexpectedly, and seemed more tired than usual, and in a few minutes he fainted away.

My heart died within me, and oh the anguish of that moment I shall never forget, for I felt that the Angel of Death had entered our little home, to carry away the beloved of my soul, and to leave me a desolate widow; and so it was.

With Lionel the fever took a rapid course, and one day, before delirium seized him, he called me and said, "Kiss me, my darling, you have been the crown and joy of my life ; but weep not for me. I am going to the King of kings, to my blessed Saviour, who died for me. We shall soon be reunited before the throne of God, you, and I, and our dear little Harry." These were the last intelligible words that he uttered, and then he sank into a profound slumber, and so passed away through the gates of death to a glorious immortality.

When all was over, a cry of anguish escaped my lips, and I was carried from the room senseless.

It was long before I recovered consciousness, and when I did, my hair, which had been nearly black, was as white as snow. Life seemed a desolate wilderness to me without Lionel. I did nothing but weep from morning

till night, and wander about from room to room, uttering my vain lamentation—

“O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.”

But no touch of the loved hand was near, no dear familiar voice responded to my cry. In my agony I would exclaim, “O my God, all Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over me. The troubles of my heart are enlarged, oh bring Thou me out of my distresses.” After some weeks, I rose from a sick bed, a wreck indeed in body, but armed with courage and fortitude, and a meek submission to the will of my Heavenly Father. I thought with pain of my ingratitude in repining, because He had taken away the desire of my eyes, only lent to me for a season, instead of overflowing with thankfulness to Him for the happiness I had enjoyed; and when I remembered how many thousands of my poor fellow-creatures, far superior to me, live and die unloved and

uncared for, the aching void in my heart seemed filled with peace, and it ceased its lamentations for ever.

Our kind old Rector had given me leave to remain at the little Rectory for six weeks ; and so great was the dread of infection, that not a human being came near the house to enquire how we were, so no one knew anything of our plans, or what was to become of us. Lionel had left me all he had in the world, which amounted to twenty-five pounds a year and the furniture in the Rectory ; he was the soul of honour, and would never incur debts, therefore I had no difficulty in settling our little affairs. I sold all the furniture we did not require, which gave me ready money with which to begin my new life. Just at this time Milly had a letter from her sister, offering her a comfortable home, which I urged her to accept, as I knew I could no longer give her any wages ; but she said, "Oh, my dear mistress,

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never speak to your old nurse again about going away, or about wages. I have served you when you were in health and happiness, do you think I could forsake you now when sorrow and sickness have overtaken you? No, dear lady, whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge. I have the strength of a man, you shall want for nothing, and I will work for you till I die."

Such was dear Milly's devotion to me. The next difficulty was, where should we go to, and how to pay the rent of the poorest place? Then suddenly we thought of these desolate cottages; the remembrance of them came like an inspiration to both of us, and Milly reminded me of what I had said on one occasion, that if ever I wanted a place to lay my head in I should go there. We settled it all in our own minds, and Milly proposed going there first, to see if it were possible to make one of the cottages habitable, as it was six years since we

had seen them ; and she wrote in a few days to say, she could make both of them quite nice for me, and she set to work at once. I sent down the little furniture that was necessary. Milly hired a cart for two days, and drove it herself from the Station and back again. No one asked her any questions as to where she was going, but they trusted her honest face.

During her absence I was greatly surprised at receiving the following letter from my brother :—

“ DEAR CONSTANCE,—I saw the death of your husband in the *Times*, and although you cannot expect any sympathy from me, as you chose, in direct opposition to my wishes, to marry a beggar instead of a peer, I write to say I will allow you fifty pounds a year, paid quarterly, so long as you live in the utmost retirement, and far away from London.—Your affectionate brother,

“ REGINALD SEYMOUR.”

Such a letter from an only brother. "Oh tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon."

My answer was :—

"DEAR REGINALD,—I am not likely ever to go to London again, or near it, and doubtless I shall live the rest of my life in the utmost obscurity ; but to receive money from a brother who is evidently ashamed of me and mine, and who never wishes to see my face again, is an utter impossibility. Milly and my boy are all the world to me, and the former will see that I want for nothing.

"That God may bless you for time and eternity, is the prayer of your affectionate sister,

"CONSTANCE ADAIR."

In about a fortnight, Milly came back to take me and Harry to our new home. When we reached it in safety, we all knelt down and

thanked God for His countless mercies, and for the pretty home He had given us.

How wonderfully Milly had managed everything; she had papered the rooms, put up white curtains, covered the chairs with new chintz, and put down a little carpet in the sitting-room. Altogether she had worked like a slave for me. May the Lord abundantly bless her for it all.

After we had looked at everything, and had partaken of our simple meal, we sang a hymn of praise, and went to sleep for the first time in our city of refuge.

During my illness I had been told that my lungs were affected, and that I must not expect to live many years. My sight also was failing me, having been injured from excessive weeping; but none of these things saddened me, and I have recovered all my former cheerfulness—only somewhat chastened. If at times I have any little anxiety, it is about my dear

Harry, but "Jehovah Jireh" is my watchword. I feel that my prayers for him will be answered, and that the Lord will write his name in the book of life.

Oh Thou who hearest prayer, provide for him, keep him from all evil, and make him Thine in body, soul, and spirit, as his father was ; and when it pleaseth Thee to call me, blessed Saviour, I am ready.

CHAPTER V.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

WHAT was my astonishment upon reading the narrative, to discover that the lady of “No Man’s Land” and Harry were cousins of my own, for Admiral Seymour was my father’s first cousin! I had never seen him, for he lived entirely abroad in my time; but I remembered that in one of the last letters I had from my father, he mentioned that Admiral Seymour and his sweet young daughter Constance were staying with him, and how much he enjoyed their visit.

I had made up my mind to adopt Harry

before I opened the pamphlet, and now I could have kissed it for conveying to my mind the happy intelligence that he really belonged to me.

Till now I had no idea what my friend's name was, nor did they know mine. It had never occurred to either of us to allude to the subject.

I continued reading the narrative over and over again, with the intensest interest, and to think that Admiral Seymour and Constance had stayed at Desborough, and known and loved my dear father, were additional claims to my affection.

I had never, from motives of delicacy, alluded to my being the possessor of such a splendid property ; now how rejoiced should I be to talk over the past with Constance, and to tell her everything. Like a school-boy, I counted the hours till the morning dawned.

As I intended staying the whole afternoon

with my newly-found relations, I ordered the groom when he brought my horse to the door to bring me a bag of oats, and to fasten it in front of me, a contrivance to which I had often had recourse in my varied travels.

"Oh, sir," said the astonished man, "had I not better ride behind you, and carry the bag?"

"No, John," I replied, "I wish to go alone."

"What on earth will people say, sir, at seeing my master riding with a bag of oats in front of him?"

"They will just say, John, that I'm another Falstaff, that is all."

"I never heard tell of that chap, sir."

"Oh," said I, "he was an old acquaintance of mine, who always went about everywhere with a frontage like this to herald his approach."

It was quite clear that the said John had made up his mind that his eccentric master would soon have to be taken to a lunatic asylum.

When I arrived at the cottage, I found Harry sitting at his mother's feet reading to her. What a pretty picture it was—to see the poor blind mother's rapt attention to every word of her little son's full sweet voice, for it was not the reading of a child, but more like the mature enunciation of a highly-cultivated man.

Harry ran up to me with great glee, saying, "Oh, sir, how delighted we are to see you, how kind of you to come again so soon! I will go and see to your horse;" and turning to his mother he added, "And, mother dear, I will be back soon."

"As soon as you possibly can," said I, "for I have something very particular to communicate to your mother and you."

When Harry returned, I said to his mother, "Your narrative has interested me in a way you little dream of, for in reading it I find that all this time I have been cultivating the friend-

ship, not of strangers, but of my own relations.

“ Dear Constance, you and Harry are my cousins. I loved you both before for yourselves, but how much more now when we can claim kinship with each other! I am Walter Desborough of Desborough Court, where you stayed with my father. I have only lately returned home after an absence of nineteen years, and if ever I saw the hand of God in any events of my life, I see it most clearly manifested in His sending me to you and Harry.”

Constance in her astonishment could only exclaim, “ Is it possible, dear friend, that you are my own cousin Walter? Then thank God for all His boundless mercies.”

As for Harry, he stood perfectly mute and motionless with amazement. The position was rather difficult for a boy of his age fully to realise, but recovering himself, he came again

and sat at his mother's feet, then alternately glancing at her and at me, as though our faces were to be his interpreters, he suddenly exclaimed with a merry laugh, "Surely, dear mother, it is just like a fairy tale; I wonder if it is quite true."

"And now, dear Constance," I continued, "I want to tell you that yesterday, on my way home, before I had looked at your narrative, I determined to make a request to you, and I trust that you will add to my happiness by granting it. Will you let me adopt Harry for my son, and he shall inherit all I possess in the world? I will send him to Oxford when he is old enough, and see to his education beforehand. This is a solemn compact between you and me, and, with the help of God, I will fulfil it to the letter."

"Oh, my dear Walter," she replied, "how can words ever express my heartfelt gratitude to you? May the Lord bless you a thousand-

fold for all your generous kindness. You have indeed filled the widow's heart with joy unspeakable. You will be a father to the fatherless, and Harry will repay you with the same devoted affection he has lavished upon me. My heart is too full for utterance, but I can truly echo the sublime words of the 'Magnificat,' 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour, for He hath remembered all my prayers, and hath granted me a thousand-fold more than my heart's desire.'"

"And, Harry," said I, "so as not seemingly to usurp the place of your honoured father, will you call me Uncle Desborough?"

"My dear Uncle Desborough," cried Harry, putting his arms round my neck and kissing me, the big tears all the time rolling down his handsome face, and then, throwing himself into his mother's arms, he said, "Oh, mother dear! the joy is too great for a poor boy like me; I can-

not tell Uncle Desborough what I feel, you must speak for me."

"My dear Harry, it is equal joy to me to have you, for, though very rich, I have hitherto been a poor lonely man, with no one at home to care for me; but now I have a son I shall always be proud of, and I shall ride home a far happier man than I was when I left it."

"Dear uncle," said Harry, "there never was any one in the whole world like you excepting mother; and, dear mother," he added, turning to her, "do let me go and bring Milly in to share our happiness; I am sure uncle would like it too."

"Most certainly, my child," replied his mother, "our happiness could not be complete without Milly. I ought to have been the first to think of her, but the events of this day have been so wonderful and unexpected that I am not mistress of myself."

When Milly came in and heard everything

she was quite radiant with delight, but she expressed no surprise ; she kissed her mistress's hand and said, " Dear lady, is it not exactly what we ought to have expected ? Did we not ask the Lord day and night to send you a friend for Master Harry ? and Mr. Desborough is that Sent One. You must remember, sir," she added, " that the first time you came to the door, I told you my mistress did expect some one, and you thought she would be disappointed when she saw you. The friend she expected was one in answer to her prayers, and I always felt sure you would turn out to be that friend."

" Yes," said Constance, " dear Milly has stated the exact truth, for ever since we have lived in these cottages, we have prayed that it would please God to send me a friend for Harry before I died ; and the first time you came here, when I heard your kind, sympathising words, my heart leapt for joy, for I felt that God had

sent you, and that you were the friend I had prayed for."

"And indeed, dear Constance, I am, as Milly justly terms it, that Sent One, for I fully believe the Lord, the Disposer of all events, directed my steps to you. There should be no such word as Chance in the vocabulary of a Christian; but the hours are fast flying away, and I wanted, dear Constance, to ask if you would all come and live with me at Desborough. You are no stranger to the place, and it is so beautiful. I should get a tutor for Harry, and see to his education myself!"

"How very kind of you, my dear Walter, to think of such a thing," she replied. "Desborough is the most beautiful place I have ever seen, but I shall never behold it again. All scenery is now alike to my poor sightless eyes. I found a refuge in this place when I was homeless, and I am attached to it;" then

lowering her voice, she added, almost in a whisper, for fear Harry might hear, "Moreover, my days upon earth are numbered ; I feel I shall not tarry very long, and I should like to die here."

"May God in His mercy avert from us all such a calamity as that !" said I ; and I felt grieved I had inadvertently alluded to the beauty of Desborough, forgetting at the moment that she was blind.

"I cannot help thinking," I added, "that change of air would do you much good ; but we will talk it all over when I return, for I find unexpectedly that I must go to London to-morrow to settle some of my affairs ; and as life is uncertain, I shall take the opportunity to make my will, so that my son Harry may inherit his own without its being disputed. I am afraid I shall be away a fortnight, but I shall be back here the moment I return. I expect a little niece of my dear wife's, and

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her governess, to come to Desborough tomorrow for three months; you must let me take Harry over some day to make friends with her, and to see what will some day be his own property. And now, dear Constance, as I shall not have the happiness of seeing you for some time, will you sing to me before I go? I do so love to hear you; it will soothe me at parting from you!"

"Let your son Harry sing to you first, dear Walter," she said, "you have never heard him. Sailor Jack has taught him some of Dibdin's songs. 'Ye Gentlemen of England' is one of his favourites, but perhaps you would prefer something different. Let him sing you 'God save the Queen,' I am sure you will be pleased. Harry is a most loyal subject, he has the greatest admiration for her Majesty, and thinks there is no one in the world to be compared to her."

"Excepting you, dearest mother, and Uncle

Desborough," said Harry, and he stood up and sung that magnificent, soul-stirring national air to perfection. He had a fine rich voice, evidently inheriting the gift of song from his mother, and was only surpassed by her.

"Now," said Constance, "I will sing you a beautiful hymn about the love of God, as that love has been so wondrously displayed this day, through you, towards me and mine."

I shall never forget the heavenly expression of her face, when, with uplifted eyes, and her hands clasped together, she sung—

" Love of God, Thou boundless ocean,
Let me lose myself in Thee,
Pour each streamlet of devotion
Into that eternal sea.
All I am, and all I have,
Launch on that Almighty wave.

" Sea of love, oh bear me nearer
To my Father's heavenly face ;
Clearer till I read, and clearer,
All the glories of His grace.
On His bosom till I lie,
Drinking deep of Deity.

“ Lulled on that celestial pillow,
Nestling child-like to that breast,
Far from life's hoarse-sounding billow,
Rock me, O my God, to rest.
One with Jesus, one with Thee,
One to all eternity.”

When the last sounds of her melodious voice died away, and I looked upon her sweet angelic face and her fragile form, I thought with inexpressible pain of her own words, “ My days upon earth are numbered.”

“ Farewell, my ever-dear Constance,” said I ;
“ the Lord watch between thee and me, when
we are absent one from another.”

“ Farewell,” she replied, “ my best and dearest friend. Farewell ! ”

Overcome with emotion, she shaded her tearful eyes with her hands, and I departed.

Harry, who had gone for my horse, was outside waiting for me.

“ Good-bye, dear Uncle Desborough,” he said ; “ how happy you have made us all to-day !
your loving, grateful Harry will do all he can

to please you. We shall miss you so much, do come back soon."

"Good-bye, my dear Harry, I shall not stay away a day longer than I can help. You may be quite certain of that."

When I rode away from the cottage, Harry went into his mother, and putting his arms round her neck, he said, "Oh, dear mother, what a wonderful day it has been! To think of Uncle Desborough being such a friend, and a relation too. It seems just like a beautiful dream."

"It does indeed, my child, but we know it is all true, and no delusion. It is a day you will ever remember with the deepest gratitude to God, and to Uncle Desborough. You have a splendid future before you, my dear Harry, and may the Angel of the Lord encamp round about you, and keep you in all your ways; and if you consecrate your life to God, as your father did, when this world has passed away you will inherit like him an eternity of surpassing glory."

“ Dear mother,” replied Harry, “ sometimes when I lie awake at night, I think of my father, and of all you have told me of his beautiful life. I will strive and follow you and him in everything, and Uncle Desborough too, for I am sure he must be like my father, or he would never have taken to a poor boy like me, although we are relations,—but, dear mother, how pale and tired you look. Let your own Harry wipe the tears from your face.”

“ No, my child, let them flow abundantly, they do me good ; they are tears of joy, and not of sorrow, for I am this day the happiest woman on the face of the earth, and have nothing more to desire, for surely my cup runneth over, and I am crowned with blessings. Now, my child, we will all kneel down and thank God for His mercies to us this day, and after we have sung a hymn of thanksgiving, we will go upstairs for the night.”

CHAPTER VI.

Bear me on Thy rapid wing,
Everlasting Spirit !
Where bright choirs of angels sing,
And the saints inherit :
Waiting round th' eternal throne,
Joys immortal are their own ;
This the cry of every one—
Glory to th' Incarnate Son.



FEW days after my departure, Harry said, "Mother dear, I think I had better get up very early to-morrow and go down to the beach. It is a long time since I have been there, and I shall not be able to go when Uncle Desborough returns. There are such quantities of things now to sell, and Milly told me she had no money in hand."

"Go then, my child ; Milly will put up your

dinner for you ; but I am sure you cannot carry all the things ; leave some of the baskets."

" Yes, dear mother, I will do that if I find I cannot carry them all. There is that beautiful comforter you knitted for Sailor Jack, I must not forget that."

" Give it to him, Harry, with my love for all his kindness to you. This is the last time, my child, that you will ever have to be selling anything ; indeed, I am not quite sure that your uncle would like my sending you now, but as he may be away longer than a fortnight, it can scarcely be avoided."

The next morning Harry, the picture of health and happiness, kissed his mother and sallied forth, singing all the way as he went along ; with some of his baskets swung across his neck, and one large one in his hand, containing all his mother's work, and his own carved wood frames.

" Good-bye, Milly dear," said he, " I'll bring

you home plenty of coppers to-night, and some silver too, I hope."

"Good-bye, Master Harry," replied Milly ; "take care of yourself, and keep out of mischief."

When Harry reached the beach he went into Sailor Jack's boat-house to eat his dinner, then he pulled out the comforter his mother had made for the old man, and said—

"This is a present for you from mother ; she made it herself for you, and she bade me give it to you with her love for all your kindness to me."

"Ain't it a beauty!" exclaimed the old tar, highly delighted ; "bless her kind heart for thinking of a poor old chap like me ; did ever any one hear the like ? but 'There's a sweet little cherub that sits up aloft, to keep watch for the life of poor Jack.'"

Then came the business of the day, and Harry was finding a rapid sale for his wares, as

the beach was crowded with people—some of them anxious to speak to the handsome boy, who looked so superior to his trade, and who expressed himself in such good language.

One old gentleman said to a friend sitting next him, "I say, Cochrane, I'll swear that youngster has a history. I have seen him here before: he and his baskets must belong to different hemispheres in the social scale."

"I'll stake my existence," replied Cochrane, "that his father was a wicked spendthrift, who, after ruining his wife and family, committed suicide, and left them to the tender mercies of this urchin, who, no doubt, will prove a true chip of the old block. I know hosts of such cases, and I always turn a deaf ear to them."

"But I think I'll buy something of him," said No. 1, "just to see what he is made of."

"My lad, what have you got in your basket

—anything to suit an old fellow in the sear and yellow leaf? Any warm mittens or comforters?”

“Yes, sir,” said Harry, “I have some of both.”

“Then I will take a comforter for my pall here, and a pair of mittens for myself; and what is the damage?”

“Three shillings, sir.”

“Well, that is dog-cheap. Come, my lad, I’ll make it four.”

“Many thanks all the same, sir, but mother priced them all herself, and I would not like to take more.”

“Well, my lad, I never met with a youngster like you before, but, as I said to my pall here, you look above your trade. I hope that some day Dame Fortune will put you in your right place. Do you live in these parts?”

“No, sir; some miles off.”

“Any brothers and sisters?”

"No, sir ; I am my mother's only child."

"And I suppose she is a widow?"

"Yes, sir ; my father has been dead some years."

"The only son of his mother, and she a widow—quite scriptural, ain't it, Cochrane?"

"Yes, by Jove! but most likely the lad is telling us a whole pack of falsehoods. I make a rule never to believe one word these sort of people tell me."

"What is your name, my lad?" said the first speaker, "and the name of the place where you live?"

"Pray excuse me, sir," said Harry, "but I cannot answer your questions, as my mother wishes to remain unknown."

"Didn't I tell you," said Cochrane, in an undertone, "the fellow is an impostor?"

"I am sorry, my lad," replied the old gentleman No. 1 (pretending not to hear Cochrane's remark), "that I asked you those questions ; it

was not from impertinent curiosity, but I really felt an interest in you."

"Thank you very much, sir," said Harry, and turning with a face as red as scarlet to Cochran, he said, "How dare you, sir, call me an impostor? I did not ask you to buy anything. You have no right to pass such a judgment upon an honest, fatherless boy; and were I a grown-up man, I would get the constable to take you up for it."

"Well, well, my lad, never mind him," said No. 1, "he is gouty and irritable, and his bark is worse than his bite.—Now there, I see a pretty little girl sitting upon that rock yonder, who has been eyeing the contents of your basket all this time; she is more in your way than we cantankerous old fellows; she will buy your gimcracks."

"Good morning, sir," said Harry, "I will go to her," and he began to show her and her governess all he had left. There were various

knitted things, and pink and blue dolls' shoes and hoods.

"Oh, how pretty they all are!" she exclaimed; "they will just do for my dolly to keep her warm in the winter. I should like to buy all the things of you to help you. Are you very poor?"

"No, not very," replied Harry.

"It must be very hard for you to have to carry that big basket, and to sell all day, instead of playing about as I do. I wonder if you have anything that would do for Nursey at home, and for Fraülein here; she is my governess, she speaks French, and only a little English. She is so cross to-day because I have torn my frock, and covered it with mud. I'd like to give her something to put her into a good humour again, she is so sweet when she is not cross. Now let me put my hand into the bottom of the basket and see what's there?"

And as she was pulling out a long knitted

scarf, the poor little thing lost her balance, and fell headlong from the rock into the sea. The *Fraülein* wrung her hands and uttered a piercing scream, but Harry, without one moment's hesitation, threw down his basket, and jumped into the sea after her.

All the company on the beach crowded to the spot, the gravest anxiety depicted on their faces, for the sea was rough, and the tide had carried her far away; but when Harry, who was an excellent swimmer, rescued her from a watery grave, and brought her safely to shore, they rent the air with their acclamations.

"Vat's your name, *mon petit garçon*?" exclaimed the governess; "*restez ici un petit moment, car, mon dieu, I must see to Missy.*"

Poor little Missy, as the governess called her, was nearly insensible, and in their anxiety about her, all the people seemed to forget the brave boy who had saved her life; but he never thought of this, and hurried away as fast

as possible. He had not gone far, when he heard a voice calling out to him to stop, and when he turned round he was much surprised to see the person who in the morning had called him an impostor.

"My lad," said Cochrane, "I have run as fast as my old legs could carry me, to tell you how sorry I am that I called you an impostor. You are a noble little fellow for saving that child's life at the risk of your own, and if ever you want a friend, remember Captain John Cochrane of 'The Knoll,' and come to me."

"How very good of you, sir, to come and tell me you are sorry. I shall forget all about it now."

It was a long walk to "No Man's Land" for a poor boy dripping wet, but Harry was too happy to think of that.

When at last he got home he found Milly at the door looking out for him.

"Oh, Master Harry!" she said, "how late you

are ; we have been so frightened for fear something had happened to you."

"Yes, Milly, I am late ; but come in and I will tell mother and you all about it."

"Mother dear," said Harry, "I have been a long time away from you, but I could not help it, and I am afraid you will be vexed, for I have lost my best basket, and some of your pretty things. A dear little girl fell off the rock into the sea, and I threw down my basket, and jumped in after her, and brought her safely to shore again."

"That is my brave boy," said his mother ; "never mind about the basket or the other things. I thank God, my dear Harry, that you are safe."

"Oh, mother ! she was such a dear little girl, I wonder if I shall ever see her again. Do you think I shall, mother ? I ran away as fast as possible, for fear they might think I wanted to be thanked for getting her out of the sea ;

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and Oh, mother ! she was such a sweet little thing ; when I put her into the arms of her governess, she opened her eyes, so I know she was alive."

"My dear child, I feel you are wet through," said his mother. "Tell me all the rest afterwards, and run upstairs and change your things, and, oh, Harry, my child, how thankful I am you are safe home again !"

"And here, Milly," cried Harry, "is all the money I got for what I sold—such a lot. I never had such a day before ; even the men who were playing, the band, bought something of me," and he emptied the contents of his pockets into Milly's lap.

"What a boon !" exclaimed Milly, "for really we were nearly penniless ; and now, Master Harry, be as quick as you can, and I shall have something nice and warm for you when you come downstairs. I am sure you will dream of that little girl to-night, you are so full of

her. Most likely she is a perfect fright, and a little, upstart, conceited minx, full of airs and graces, and not worth twopence."

After delivering herself of this diatribe, and without waiting for any response, Milly shut the door, and went down to her mistress.

When Harry joined his mother she said, "Now, my dear Harry, tell me all about the little girl, and how the whole thing happened."

Then Harry went through the events of the day over again, striking continually the same key-note, and dwelling most minutely upon every word the little girl had uttered, the song ever ending with the same refrain, "Oh, mother ! such a dear little girl."

His mother was greatly amused at his enthusiasm about the little stranger, and she said, smiling—

"Well, Harry, when you come to live with Uncle Desborough, you will, most likely, see a great number of people, and amongst them

perhaps some little girls; then this particular one may not appear such a paragon of perfection in your eyes, although having saved her life must ever make you feel interested in her welfare. I think she is the first little girl you have ever spoken to."

"The first little lady, mother! Perhaps Uncle Desborough knows her. I hope he will come back soon; don't we miss him, mother dear?"

"We do indeed, my child, for he is a friend who sticketh closer than a brother, and that reminds me, my dear Harry, of something I wanted to say to you. When Uncle Desborough acknowledges you publicly for his adopted son and heir, I do not doubt but that your Uncle Reginald will find you out and claim you for his nephew,—then, my child, bear him no ill-will for his unkindness to me, but forgive him and be friends with him."

"Oh, dear mother!" said Harry, "be friends

with a man who deserted you, and acted so cruelly by you. No, dear mother, I feel that will be impossible."

"There is nothing so difficult, my child, I know, as to forgive injuries. It is, I think, one of the greatest Christian achievements, and far more difficult than to bestow all one's goods to feed the poor; but when we remember how much God has forgiven us, it makes it easier for us to forgive our fellow-creatures; and, my Harry, you will do it for my sake, and tell him I frankly forgave him, and never passed a day without praying for him."

"Oh, dear mother!" said Harry, "I will do what you wish, although I hate the very sound of his name, for I think he must be as hard as the flints with which Milly paved the outside of these cottages,—and your own brother too! But, oh! dear mother, it makes me so sad to hear you talk like this; it just sounds as if I were to leave you, to go and live with Uncle Des-

borough. How can I ever do that? I would sooner work hard and make baskets all my life than leave you. It would break my heart, for we have been so happy together; and, mother, I overheard Milly tell Uncle Desborough that your life hung upon a thread; how, then, could I leave you?" and putting his arms round his mother's neck, he wept aloud. "Oh, don't send me away without you," he continued; "mother dear, promise that we shall not be separated."

"My dear child, I promise that God alone shall separate us; but we will talk it all over with Uncle Desborough when he returns, and rest assured that, with his noble, generous nature, he will do all things well. And now, my child, shall I sing a little to you, it is such an intense pleasure to me when my heart is attuned to it?"

"Yes, dear mother, I always feel away from earth, and in heaven, when I hear you sing. I think King David must have had a voice

like yours when he drove the evil spirit out of Saul."

"I am afraid, my dear Harry, that it would require far more melody than I am mistress of to exorcise an evil spirit, but the Sweet Psalmist of Israel was an inspired musician and Prophet ; and now what shall I sing?"

"‘Sun of my soul ! Thou Saviour dear,’" replied Harry, "it is one of my favourite hymns."

"And one of mine too," said his mother. As she sang the last few words of the hymn, the sweet tones of her voice faltered, and like the plaintive echoes of an Æolian harp, it struck so solemn a chord, that Harry jumped up, and cried "Oh, mother, mother, you are ill!"

"Yes, my child, I feel a little faint, that is all. Just call Milly, I shall be all right in a few minutes."

When Milly came in, she said, "My dear lady, Master Harry and I will carry you upstairs, you will be better for lying down."

After they had placed her on the bed, she said to Harry, "My dear child, leave me with Milly for a short time, and then I will call for you."

"Yes, dear mother," said Harry, fondly kissing her; and he left the room, with a face as white as death, and from which all the sunshine of youth had departed. He sat upon his little stool in the dark, and with folded arms, and his head bowed between his knees, he cried, "O my God, for Jesus' sake, give me back my dear mother."

When Milly was left alone with her mistress she said, "My dear lady, I have a cordial here, which Mr. Desborough left for me to give you when you felt faint."

"Dear Milly, no cordial on earth will be of any avail. I have a presentiment that my time is come. I had a sort of vision last night—the room seemed full of glory, and holy angels were watching around me, and chanting

my requiem. I thought I heard a voice say, 'Sister spirit, come away.' It might have been only a dream, but it was so beautiful, just like a foretaste of heavenly bliss. I look upon it as a summons for me to be ready.

"First of all, dear Milly, there is a sum of money in my desk, which I set aside for my funeral before I came here. I saved it out of the sale of the furniture, as I never expected to live so long. After my departure, go to the little Rectory near the beach, and speak to the clergyman about my burial. Engage some poor men, Sailor Jack for one, to carry me away from this, and you and Harry follow me to the grave. There is no longer any necessity for secrecy about our living here, for when Mr. Desborough returns he will take you and Harry home; he told me you should live with him all your life, and I have left you all the money I have, which is the £25 a year. Mr. Desborough knows all about it."

"Oh, my dear lady," said Milly, "this sorrow has come upon us so suddenly, and Mr. Desborough away, and we do not know his address."

"He will be back, Milly, in a week or so; you and Harry wait here till he comes; and now, dear Milly, I want you to write to him for me;" and she dictated the following lines to be given to him when he returned :—

"MY EVER-DEAR AND BELOVED BENEFACTOR,—
You may remember my saying to you, at our last parting, that my days upon earth were numbered, and a warning voice tells me I shall be taken home ere you come again. Oh, my dearest Walter, I have no words to express my boundless gratitude to you. May the Everlasting Arms surround you, and keep you from all evil, till we meet in a joyful eternity.—Ever your devoted and affectionate

"CONSTANCE ADAIR."

When this was written she said, "Now, dear Milly, give me some of the cordial, and if I fall asleep, you and Harry watch by me. I should like to see your loved faces when I awake."

When Milly went down to fetch Harry, she found him still sitting like a statue upon his little stool, and gently rousing him, she said, "Your mother is now sleeping; God grant that she be better after that."

"No, Milly, she will never be better. Mother is dying. One day I overheard you tell Uncle Desborough that her life hung upon a thread. I have watched her ever since, and seen her strength decaying, and Oh, Milly! I want to die with her: how can I live without mother? I feel as if my heart would break."

"And so do I, Master Harry; but remember, dear, that if she passes away, it will be the Lord who has sent for her to take her to Himself; but come up and watch by her side;

she wished to find both you and her poor old nurse near her when she awoke."

After watching by her side for some time, she awoke, and not knowing they were there, she began to sing in a low tone—

"Vital spark of heavenly flame,
Quit, oh quit, this mortal frame ;
Trembling, lingering, hoping, flying,
Oh ! the pain, the bliss, of dying."

When her voice ceased, Harry said, "Dearest mother, we are here ;" then Milly, with natural delicacy, feeling assured it was the chamber of death, crept away to a corner in the room, so as to leave mother and son together.

"Harry, my beloved child," said his mother, "what a blessing you have been to me ! we have been one in spirit in all things, and now I am about to leave you, but instead of your mother you will have a devoted father in your dear uncle, which will be much better for you, now you are growing up."

"Oh, mother, mother!" cried Harry, "how can I live without you? Do not leave your own Harry. Oh, mother! must you die?"

"It is not really death, my child, it is the gate that leadeth to life eternal, to that home in heaven provided for me by our adorable Redeemer. Oh what wondrous love thus to die for poor sinners!—I shall behold Him in all His glorious beauty, and my beloved husband, I shall again embrace him who has never been absent from my thoughts since he left me a desolate widow. But call Milly, for I feel my strength failing me."

"Farewell, dear Milly; may God bless you a thousand-fold for all your kindness to me and mine."

"Farewell, my dear lady," said Milly, too much overcome to utter another word.

"Now kiss me, my child, and let me die with your arms round my neck. Oh, my Harry! the boundless ocean is too narrow to shadow forth

my perfect peace and happiness." Then commending her soul to God, she sank into a quiet sleep, from which she awoke no more.

I must draw a veil over the next few days, for grief so profound is too sacred for words to record ; it must be borne alone with God.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Lay her i' the earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring.”

EARLY on the following Sunday, the little funeral procession wended its way to the churchyard by the sea. Mr. Hastings, the clergyman, who was greatly touched by seeing the grief of the poor boy who was chief mourner, and who looked so superior to his surroundings, went up to him and said, “ My poor boy, I suppose it is your mother I have just laid in the grave ? ”

“ Yes, sir, it is my beloved mother.”

“ When your friend,” said Mr. Hastings, “ came to see me about the funeral, she did not

mention any particulars. After the morning service is over, come into the Rectory with her ; I should like much to speak to you more fully."

"Thank you, sir ; I will come and bring Milly with me."

When the congregation began to disperse, poor Harry was still lying on the grass, with his head resting on the little mound that covered all he held most dear upon earth, when suddenly a little girl ran up to him with outstretched arms, exclaiming, "I am sure you are the kind boy who took me out of the sea when I was nearly drowned ! I knew your face in a moment, and so did Fräulein ; I am so glad to see you again. We tried so hard to find out all about you, but no one could tell us where you lived, or what your name was : mine is Sybil Grey ; but how sad you look ! has any one you loved very much just died ?"

"This is my mother's grave," said Harry.

"Oh, I am so sorry for you," replied Sybil ; "I

think I could not live any longer if my mother died."

"I thought so too," said Harry ; "but I must say-good bye, as I am just going to the Rectory with Milly."

"Good-bye," said Sybil, kindly taking his hand in hers ; "I hope I shall see you again some day. When uncle comes home, I shall tell him all about you, and he will go and bring you home to us. I am sure he will, he is so kind."

"Now come along, Missy," cried Fräulein ; "de carriage be waiting all dis time."

"Good-bye again," said Sybil ; "Fräulein is always so cross before she has her luncheon."

"My poor lad," said Mr. Hastings, "I only wish I had known you before. I had no idea that any one had lived in the cottages at 'No Man's Land' for years past. I thought they were quite in ruins, till your friend here came about the funeral."

Then Milly came forward and said, "I was only my dear mistress's servant, sir."

"Not a servant," said Harry, "but our dearest friend, who did everything for us, and worked like a slave for love, and not for money, for we could never pay her anything."

"Such generous feelings do equal honour to you both," replied Mr. Hastings; "and if I can be of any use to you, I shall only be too happy."

"Many thanks, sir," said Harry; "but Mr. Desborough will be coming soon to take us to live with him."

"Mr. Desborough of Desborough Court?" said Mr. Hastings. "I have a slight acquaintance with him. If you have him for your friend you will require no help from any one: he has only, I think, been home about a year, he and his little niece, and all his people come to my church, as the church he is building is not yet finished."

A gleam of pleasure passed over Harry's

pale face as the thought struck him, and Milly too, that the little girl, Sybil Grey, must be Uncle Desborough's niece, and he said—

“Has the little niece, sir, a German governess?”

“Yes, Fräulein Rudolph; they were both in church this morning. Do you know little Miss Grey?”

“She spoke to me,” said Harry, “before we came in here, when I was sitting by my mother's grave. I had seen her once before, but I did not know who she was. As you have been so very kind to me and Milly, sir, I think I should like to tell you that Mr. Desborough was my mother's cousin, and he has lately adopted me for his son: he went to London to settle his affairs, and my dear mother unfortunately died in his absence.”

Mr. Hastings listened with the greatest interest to this little history, which seemed to him a perfect romance, and not like the ordinary

prosaic life to which he had been accustomed, and he said—

“My boy, I am rejoiced to hear that Mr. Desborough has adopted you. I only hope a great many rich ladies and gentlemen, who are childless, and have no poor relations, will follow his good example. I am afraid I must now leave you, as I have to prepare for the afternoon service. I have ordered some dinner to be brought in at once for you and Milly, and the pony carriage will take you home afterwards.”

“Oh, sir,” cried Harry, “how can I thank you enough for your kindness to poor strangers like us?”

“Thank me,” said Mr. Hastings, “by letting me come and see you, when you go to live with Mr. Desborough; and believe me when I say, how very glad I am to have made your acquaintance.”

When I returned home after just a fortnight's

absence, Sybil came running to meet me, saying, "Oh, uncle! I must tell you all about a brave boy, who saved me from being drowned. I saw him last Sunday weeping at his mother's grave, and I cried too, for he pulled me out of the sea, and you know he might have been drowned himself. I told him I was sure you would go and see him, and bring him here."

With inexpressible sorrow I recognised in a moment that the boy was Harry, and the grave was that of my dear Constance. I waited not a moment to hear more, but sent for the carriage back again, and started for "No Man's Land," leaving orders for rooms to be got ready for Harry and Milly, and arriving there I found my worst fears realised.

"My dear uncle!" said Harry, then he quite broke down.

"Would that I had been here, my boy. I grieve to think I shall see that angel face no more. I heard all about it from Sybil as soon

as I arrived, and came here immediately. I must take you away with me, and Milly too. I have ordered a beautiful bed-room and sitting-room to be got ready for you, and a room for Milly close by. She can put up what you will want for the night. No one will come near this place, and to-morrow I will send and have all your things packed for you."

"My dear uncle," said Harry, "how thankful I shall be to go home with you. Oh how I have longed for you to come and take me away! This place is like a living grave to me without my beloved mother. I must tell you, that she wished me to give all the furniture to Sailor Jack, who has been so kind to me, for she said I should never want any of it again. The only things I should like to keep are, the chair she always sat in, and my father's books."

"By all means," I replied, "let Sailor Jack have the things; you are my son now, and all that I have is yours. As soon as I get you

home, Sybil, who is a sweet little girl, will help Milly to nurse you, for, my poor boy, you look very ill ; we must get you well again as soon as possible. It seems to me a wonderful Providence that you should have saved Sybil's life, and that she should have recognised you last Sunday at your mother's grave. She will be like a dear little sister to you, and as she is to spend four months every year with me, you will see a good deal of each other ; but here comes Milly, and all is ready for our departure."

Just as we were getting into the carriage, I was much touched by Harry placing in my hands a little packet containing some of his mother's hair, and her farewell letter to me.

" Death, ere thou hast slain another,
Good, and wise, and fair is she,
Time shall throw his dart at thee."

With a song of praise in our hearts for all the mercies of the past, we bade farewell to " No Man's Land " for ever, hoping that some

lone wanderer might still find a shelter beneath its mouldering roofs, ere they crumbled to dust, and were no more seen.

For several weeks poor Harry lay prostrate with sickness. During all that trying time Sybil helped to nurse him with tenderness and devotion far above her years. Even Milly was somewhat deposed from her throne as head nurse, for he would take his medicines from no other hand but Sybil's, and after her lessons were over, she would sit by his side, and read his favourite books to him.

Mr. Hastings was now an almost daily visitor to Harry's sick-room, and an ardent friendship was formed between this excellent minister and his young friend. How often they talked over their first never-to-be-forgotten interview, and all the tender recollections connected with it. Poor Sailor Jack too, now quite in affluent circumstances, would often come over, and be sure of a hearty welcome

from all, dear Milly taking especial care that every possible attention should be paid to him.

Soon after we were settled, I had all that remained of my dear Constance removed from the little churchyard by the sea to my own family vault at Desborough, and I ordered a monument to her memory to be placed in our new church when it was finished. As I stood by her coffin when it was lowered into the vault, I sighed to think how long it might be ere I beheld her glorified spirit in heaven.

“Forgive, blest shade, the tributary tear,
Which mourns thy exit from a world like this ;
Forgive the wish that would have kept thee here,
And stay’d thy progress to the realms of bliss.”

By the time Harry was quite convalescent our new church was finished, and how sweetly he expressed his grateful love to me when I showed him his mother’s beautiful monument.

“And now, Harry,” said I, “what shall we

do to commemorate the opening of the church ? We must celebrate the event a day or two after the consecration with rejoicings befitting the occasion. It would be a good opportunity for having the whole county to some grand entertainment ; but what do you think, my boy ? ”

“ Let me go and ask Sybil,” he replied.

“ By all means. I should like to have your joint opinion on the subject.”

Presently these dear children came to me hand in hand, and said spontaneously—

“ Dear uncle, we were reading this morning the 14th chapter of St. Luke, and we should like to have a big feast like that described in verse 13. Let us have Sailor Jack, blind Peggy, lame Johnny Smith, and all the poor people for miles round, and, uncle, all the children too. We should like them to have a big dinner at one o'clock, games of all sorts to amuse them afterwards, and a good supper before they leave.”

"My dear children," I replied, "that is exactly what I should like myself; you have both expressed my mind in expressing your own. I like to show hospitality to all, and we can have our richer friends and neighbours another time, but we will have the poor first, and give them the best of everything and plenty of it. They have a rough and thorny road to travel, with few flowers strewn in their path, and this feast shall be one of them."

And so it was. A more glorious day never dawned from heaven upon this beautiful earth. An unclouded blaze of sunshine gilded the sky, tingling everything with light and gladness. Surely this 1st of August was a red-letter day in the calendar of all present, a day of unmixed enjoyment and felicity—the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind forgot their sorrows, and all mingled together as one happy family.

In the evening a deputation, headed by the churchwardens, came to request I would allow

a tablet to be placed in the church, recording my name as having built it. How well did I then remember the beautiful lines oft quoted by my father—

“Who builds a church to God, and not to Fame,
Will never mark the marble with his name.”

And these lines supplied my answer on the occasion.

How swiftly glided away that happy day, and before our guests took their departure, Mr. Hastings started the evening hymn.

Never can any of us forget, when beneath the canopy of heaven, hundreds of voices joined in the last verse, filling the air with the melody of thankfulness.

“Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow :
Praise Him, all creatures here below ;
Praise Him above, Angelic host ;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

CHAPTER VIII.

"Great God, what do I see and hear ?
The end of things created !
Behold the Son of man appear,
On clouds of glory seated !
Low at His feet I view the day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
And thus prepare to meet Him."



EARS have rolled away since my last chapter, and I must leave imagination to fill up the hiatus. Harry had left Oxford and returned to Desborough. Splendid in appearance, a refined scholar, a most noble character ; and to crown the whole, a true and earnest Christian. Inheriting his mother's deep devotion, her veneration for all that was sacred, and her tender affections, he

also possesses a strength of character peculiarly his own, and rarely found in one so young. Such is Harry Desborough Adair, my beloved adopted son, and those who know the original will undoubtedly recognise the portrait.

Soon after Harry's return, Sybil came to pay me her yearly visit—one of the sweetest flowers of womanhood. Words would fail me to draw her picture. I knew she would be a crown to her husband, and oh! how earnestly I longed that an attachment more tender than that of brother and sister might spring up between her and Harry, and my prayer was abundantly answered; for a year ago the bells of our beautiful church were ringing merrily for their wedding, but I wrote not the details of that joyful event, because the full tide of remembrance was flooding my soul, of how soon my own happy marriage was dissolved;—but to-day another blessing has been added to my cup already overflowing, for a son and heir

has been born to Sybil and Harry, and a grandson to me. And when dear old Milly, like another Naomi, put the baby into my arms, I blessed God with heartfelt emotion for His faithful, loving-kindness to me and mine. How sublime for a heathen philosopher was Plato's conception of the Deity: "God is truth, and the bright light is His shadow." Blessed shade of my departed Constance, if disembodied spirits are permitted to behold their loved ones on earth, thou wilt rejoice over the happy advent of the little immortal committed this day to our care.

Time has now ploughed deep furrows on my brow, and crowned my head with the snows of many winters. The glories of earth are fading away, and although surrounded with riches and honours, and all the happiness this world can bestow, I am longing to depart. At times, in the stillness of the night, my thoughts wander far, far away towards those loved ones bloom-

ing in Paradise. Like the sound of many waters, I seem to hear their seraphic voices calling me home.

Children of immortality, we cannot for ever be satisfied with earthly joys; there comes a day when our souls yearn for a higher life and more ethereal existence; an inheritance in the boundless ocean of eternity.

And when the last trumpet shall sound, and heaven and earth pass away, may I, together with all the mighty army of His redeemed ones, meet my Blessed Saviour in clouds of glory.

And with triumphant songs of joy
Crown the Mighty Victor's brow.

